

ParaNorman
By Lorraine Viade, PsyD



ParaNorman is a quirky, engaging story about what it is like to be different, which is something that is not easily understood or appreciated and often resented to the point of cruelty. Norman is an atypical kid who can see and talk to the dead. In my culture, that would be nothing new, but where Norman lives, people were put to death for having that sort of giftedness. Norman is bullied at school, mocked at home and belittled by his father who seems to be afraid of what he just doesn't understand. Norman is also bashed by his older sister until she comes to realize just how special her brother really is.

ParaNorman is about courage and about accepting yourself even when everyone around you doesn't want to see you as you truly are. Because Norman has a solid and unshakable sense of self, he is able to stand up to the living and the dead with equal strength and character. He has the depth of understanding that often accompanies the outcast, he seeks to understand the wounds behind the actions and in doing so he is able to help and to heal. By helping others, Norman lives up to his purpose and uses his gifts to help save his family and his community, and to some extent, he saves himself from being a victim of mockery. He achieves his true potential and embraces his gifts as part of his nature and identity. As he accepts, so do the others in his world and acceptance is the key to success and to living in harmony with the past looking ahead to the future.

The movie is so well crafted that younger children may be a little frightened by it all, but by the end, they come around and enjoy the humor and the message that being different is a blessing and not a curse. ParaNorman deals with some serious subjects in a sensitive way, reminding us that adults often say things to their children that they shouldn't out of fear that their child will not be accepted for who they are. So many parents struggle to accept it when their child is different, and lack the understanding of how their rejection hurts. I liked the fact that the parents finally saw the light. ParaNorman gives new definition to the term extended family—extended into the paranormal.

I give ParaNorman 4 couches.

